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Knowsley Flower Show **archive**

A resource and celebration









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and celebration



Marquee, 2019





The Freda Gabrielson Class entries, 2014

This little book brings together highlights of the Knowsley Flower Show Archive, available at [www.knowsleyflowershowarchive.co.uk](http://www.knowsleyflowershowarchive.co.uk)

It's a gift for you.

## Introduction

The Knowsley Flower Show Archive presents personal memories, materials and memorabilia of Knowsley Flower Show, between its inception in 1999 and today. In particular, the Archive focuses on the growers, competitors and visitors to the Marquee, which goes from strength to strength and remains the centre of the event.

Knowsley Flower Show averages around 20,000 visitors to its large day event in August every year. It is a free public event held at Court Hey Park, a public park in Knowsley.

The event centres on a traditional Marquee with around 90 amateur growers exhibiting and competing for prizes in categories encompassing fruit and vegetables, flowers, produce and crafts.

The exhibitors range in age from under ten to over 80. The Flower Show arose from the initiative of a number of amateur growers, allotment holders and horticultural and garden society members, interested in promoting growing, horticultural crafts and skills, local ecology, environmental awareness and healthy living. This is still the ethos of the Flower Show.

The Flower Show and history are significant community identity markers for Knowsley. Two decades after its foundation, the communities that constitute the Flower Show are instrumental in diverse social networks in Knowsley and the Region.





After the Show, 2019

## Allotments, Societies, Clubs and Gardens

**I'd started off with a lawn at the back and gradually it disappeared...**

I had an allotment at Glendevon Allotments, since the mid 1980s. I'd started exhibiting in shows from my garden at home. I'd started off with a lawn at the back and gradually it disappeared so I could grow flowers.



First Prize Winner, Class 90, 2019

#### **I got interested through my father...**

I've been a member of Whiston Gardening Club for around 35 years. I got interested through my father, who was also a member. His main interests were birds, poultry and strawberries. At one point, I had five greenhouses in the back garden, as well as the allotment at Whiston. It was through the Club that I became a founder member of the Committee of Knowsley Flower Show in 1998.

### **My first allotment around here was at Knotty Ash, in 1985.**

I shared it with a mate off the buses. I moved to Bowring Park allotments around 1990, which is where I met Tony Hill. In 2006, I moved again, to Cabbage Hall in St Helens, which is where I am now. When I first took on an allotment, there were plenty of empty plots. There really wasn't the enthusiasm for growing that there had been through the 1960s and 70s. At St Helens now, there are 60 on the waiting list and people can wait seven or eight years to get one.



Entry, Class 59, 2006





Entry, The Freda Gabrielson Class, 2010



We'd put a towel out with veg on

We had a show at the Bowring Park Allotment – we'd just put a towel out with veg on. Dave Thompson, who worked for the council parks and gardens at the time, would come down and judge it. There was a lot of growing expertise at Court Hey Park. There were council greenhouses growing plants for the parks and gardens.

Cuper Crescent allotments

I did have an allotment at Cuper Crescent, for 17 years. There was an overlap between growers who had allotments and the Knowsley Flower Show. There still is. My husband Jack had retired and I thought that the allotment would do him good, but I was the driving force. I ended up as Secretary!

Prizes and Trophies, 2012







Marquee, 2014



Entry, Class 93, 2019

### Life-enhancing

My daughter-in-law's life was transformed by leaving work, and working with me on the allotment. It can be very life-enhancing.

### I grew dahlias everywhere.

We moved to the North West to Connagh's Quay in June 1969, because I was doing contract work for British Steel and they offered me a permanent job. My wife came from there. I grew dahlias everywhere, in the garden, up the street, in my mother-in-law's garden. I also had them in Wrexham, growing them in a friend's nursery. I got into growing dahlias at home in Yorkshire. It was the man who read the electric meter; he was a good grower of dahlias and said I should be growing dahlias in the garden. He gave me a list around 1966 and that's how I started.



Entries, Class 12, 2014



# QVC

is pleased to sponsor the first  
Knowsley Flower Show  
and wish all involved every success



is pleased to be associated  
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**Partners in this venture:**

Knowsley Events & Promotions Office  
Knowsley Parks & Countryside Service  
Knowsley Arts Unit  
Roby & District Horticultural Society  
Whiston & District Horticultural Society  
Landlife

Knowsley Flower Show  
Schedule cover, 1999



Designed by Marketing & Research Section, Knowsley MBC

**SCHEDULE**

## **KNOWSLEY FLOWER SHOW 1999**

**SUNDAY, 8TH AUGUST**

**HORTICULTURAL EXHIBITIONS**

*Prizes for the best ...*

Vegetables ... Floral Art ... Cut Flowers ... Potted Plants

*Attractions on the day ...*

Bee Keeping ... Falconry Displays ... Craft Workshops  
... Ranger Walks ... Recycling Roadshows

*To be held at*

Court Hey Park, The National Wildflower  
Centre, Roby Road, Huyton



## Beginnings



Marquee, 2019

## Something for the millennium.

In 1999, Knowsley Council wanted events to celebrate the millennium. Some members of Whiston Gardening Club thought it would be good to have a Knowsley Show. But the Council had no expertise in setting up or running a competitive growing show. They needed gardening people, so they got in touch with allotment holders – Whiston and also Roby Horticultural Society members. The council had gardeners and growers for its own parks, gardens and greenhouses, but it didn't have a list of exhibitors, like Whiston Show did. They didn't have the expertise.

### Originally it was meant to be a one-off.

When we first set up the Show, there were people who had a passion for shows. They wanted to start a new one, to make up for the losses of other shows. We had to find a show Secretary, who knew how to do things. I had been a show Secretary, so I volunteered. Originally it was meant to be a one-off. It's been 21 years now! When you find something you're good at, you want to continue. That's what happened with me being Secretary of the Show.



De-installing the Show, 2019





Marquee, 2011



Entry, Class 20, 2006

### Allotment, Society and Show

Some of the first people who started the Show were members of Roby Horticultural Society's Committee. I was Secretary since the 1990s. I was the gardener, so that's how I came to join the Society, around 1982. Then came my allotment. Then the Society and then the Show. The Society has been going since the 1940s. I had a big interest in the Show, being the Secretary of the other Society. I thought this will be a good thing to do.

### Eight or nine shows a year

My interest in growing came from my parents as my mum used to exhibit in the local flower show in Kirkby. She used to grow everything but especially liked fruit. She got an allotment in Fazakerly, which I helped out on, then in time I took it over and expanded to the point I eventually had four allotments. I used to do eight or nine shows a year locally, largely showing vegetables, dahlias and some cut flowers with my brother; we were very successful.





Prize winners, Class 5, 2019



Flower Classes Entries, 2009

Vegetable Class Entries, 2009



Marquee, 2017



Entries, Geranium Classes, 2008



Flower Classes Entries, 2019







Vegetable Classes: cauliflowers, 2015



## Growing

### I just fell in love with growing

This feeling of sort of freedom – out in the air – and just being able to do something physical, and I could feel the pressure disappear, and I had something at the end of it that was beautiful and I'd nurtured it. Gardening saved my mental health.

#### Growing and cooking

There's such a thing now for teaching people to know where food comes from, how to cook and what's healthy. Apart from the competition side, growing, cooking and eating are all part of the Show, when it comes to fruit and veg. It seems so obvious. I'm hoping to share some experience with the new Incredible Edible that is setting up in the old Wildflower Centre, with any luck.

Entries, Class 26, 2014



Enthusiasm carried us...

We went into it completely blind. It was enthusiasm that carried us forward. We built up over time. At that time, a lot of the allotments were overgrown and neglected. Now they're popular, with waiting lists.

#### My grandad started me

I was very active. I enjoyed the outdoors. I love growing things. Both my grandads were good gardeners, during the War, so it came naturally. My grandad in Walton started me when I was about 12. He got me to plant out lettuce, radishes...



Entries, Class 77, 2006





Vegetable Class Entries, 2006

The pleasure of growing, picking and eating your own stuff

We're organic! It's the pleasure of growing, picking and eating your own stuff that motivates me. It's the whole process.

#### Leeks, onions, potatoes, artichokes and soft fruit

I like to grow leeks and onions. I don't know why, really. I grow them, dig them up and hang them to preserve them. I give them away. I like potatoes. I like artichokes, although they take a long time to get ready. We grow soft fruit and my son makes jam, and we grow apples – he makes chutney.



Entries, Class 92, 2014



## Working Together

There are so many paths to take...

The growing is seasonal. It also has its rounds of events and society. The social aspect of growing is very important. The great thing about gardening is that there are so many paths to take – so much to grow. Eventually, I arrived at the love of my life – perennials (plants that flourish year after year). Aquilegia, eryngium, hellebores. I'd grown annuals (plants that only live a year) before then, but I found my passion with perennials.

## The allotment fed us.

If I hadn't gone into teaching I'd have gone into horticulture. At one stage we had four allotments. We were a self-sufficient family. I remember my brother coming home after being away and complaining that there were only sprouts. But that's what we had. So, the allotment fed us. I grew up planting. We all joined in. In July we'd be picking black currants for hours and hours.



Marquee, 2011



Entries, Classes 33, 34 and 35, 2015





Entry, Class 65 , 2009

## Flowers, Fruit and Vegetables: Vegetables, Fruit and Flowers

### I was an oddity...

I was an oddity on the Glendevon allotment. I was the only woman on the allotment in the 1980s and I grew flowers. All the men grew veg. I encouraged them to grow more flowers, with some success. We got on really well.



First and Second Prize Winners, Class 22, 2019

### Grandad grew veg. Dad was a flowers man

From the age of four, I worked with my granddad on the plot beside that house, growing veg. Grandad grew veg. Dad was a flowers man. Since then, I say, if you can't eat it, don't grow it!

### Competitive veg

The competitive vegetables aren't for eating of course. A lot of people grow large. Some men take a delight in it. They try and out-do each other. It's not the same as someone growing a perfect rose.





Pot Plants Category entry, 2005



## Quality

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### The quality of the growing is very important

The quality of the growing is very important. It's spectacular. People don't come in and say 'It's no better than I grow at home.' There's that element of spectacle. It's inspiring – the Wow! factor. Then they might think 'I have no chance of competing with produce of this quality...' and that's why we have novice classes. It's like paddling before you dive in!

#### Judging dahlias

I've been judging the Knowsley Flower Show for four of five years now. We look at freshness, colour, size and if there's stiff competition, the stem. It's all in the classification directory. I used to judge at the shows in Harrogate, London, Stoke, Liverpool Garden Festival, all over. These days I just do a few. I just have a couple of dahlias at home these days. The green house is now full of car parts! I do up old cars, my son is into old cars too.



Entries, Class 26, 2014



## Competition

### The competition tests you...

The competition tests you as a grower – you learn more. If you keep winning, you don't bother analysing why you win. But if you don't win, you analyse more and learn more. And there's always expertise on tap, from the other growers and competitors. For example, people might say 'Oh there's no point entering a class which experienced exhibitors enter. And that's why we have Novice Classes in the Show, so that everyone has a chance to compete on a level playing field. There's a reason that experienced growers are successful – time and effort and learning. They'd be delighted if someone enters a better exhibit, because really, they enjoy the competition.



After the Show, 2019

### I've grown virtually everything

Over the last 20 years, I've had wide interests. I've shown and entered competitions for virtually everything: cabbages, marrows, cauliflowers, apples, pears, figs, chrysanthemums and sweet peas, to name just a few. I'm particularly interested in growing prize onions, including a five pound onion, shallots and half pound onions. I'm now a judge for the National Vegetable Society. I travel all over Merseyside and Yorkshire judging and giving talks. Of course, I enter vegetables in the Knowsley Flower Show and so I can't judge them. Rather, I have judged flowers and the children's classes of entries.

### I don't compete elsewhere, however...

This year (2019) I'm tempted to enter a cabbage in the Whiston Show. It's the plant speaking to me and me thinking "I've got a cabbage." I looked at it a couple of weeks ago and it's pretty big, in very good condition and I thought "What the hell can I do with that?" It's definitely competitive and may be a winner. It's a Brunswick, a variety of winter cabbage, which is a bit strange, because it's August. Climate change. I've got sprouts almost ready too. Sprouts in August!





Marquee, 2019



Free Flower Show Bus Service, 2019



Prize Rosettes, 2019



Plant Sale after the Show, 2019

Marquee, 2008



Entries, Class 100, 2005







The Freda Gabrielson Class entries, 2016

You have to compete

You have to compete, otherwise single entries win the day!

### The prizes, cups and shields

The prizes for winning exhibits at the Show come from the Show sponsors. Some of these are growers and some of them are businesses or supporters of the Show. The grandest is the Best in Show cup that is awarded across all classes of produce. Councilor Quillam, who was a great supporter of all of the allotments, donated it. Because the Show is affiliated with the Royal Horticultural Society, we also award an annual Banksian Medal, to the exhibitor with the highest number of points in the Horticultural sections, that is, the Vegetable, Fruit and Flower Growing Sections.

### Plants surprise you."

We competed because there was pride in growing. There was a competitive streak to beat the established best growers, the good growers. But anyone can compete, because plants surprise you. Even novices can grow prize-winning plants.



The Royal Horticultural Society Banksian Medal





Entries, Class 112, 2019



Dahlia Classes judging tools, 2019

## Future

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### Roby Park School

I worked at Roby Park School. I tried to get schools involved in growing, but a lot of the schools wouldn't support the Show during the holiday. It was difficult for them. I stopped working with the schools because I didn't get a lot of response, but now there are a couple of retired teachers on the Show Committee and they do a great job. They know the schools! There's a Flower Show prizegiving now at Roby Park Primary, for kids who have participated in the Show.

### Protecting, nurturing and improving Court Hey Park

The Friends of Court Hey Park started in 1998, because there was a rumour that the Park was going to be sold for building. The role of the Friends is to protect and nurture the Park. Part of this is raising money to improve the park. We see the Flower Show as the pinnacle of the year – it shows off the Park and encourages people to feel that the Park is a resource for them.





Entries, Classes 94 and 95, 2019





First Prize Card, 2019

## A good life

We had a good life with the dahlias. With my wife Beryl who was into growing dahlias as well, we've been with friends from the National Dahlia Society on holidays to Malta, Spain, Cyprus and Portugal. I went to Holland with them to see the dahlia fields and we were often asked to the nurseries over there. I would come back with a case full of bulbs of all kinds for my wife.



Outside the Marquee, 2019



Entries, Classes 3 and 4, 2019



This book and the Knowsley Flower Show Archive were launched at Knowsley Leisure and Culture Park on 21 March 2020, with a supporting exhibition.

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We hope that the Archive will be available for a long time into the future. If you want to contact the Archive to add your own memories or photos, or to comment, please get in touch at [knowsleyflowershow@mail.com](mailto:knowsleyflowershow@mail.com)

For further current information about Knowsley Flower Show, visit [www.knowsleyflowershow.com](http://www.knowsleyflowershow.com)



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